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CARL RUSSELL FISH

THE FRONTIER A WORLD PROBLEM¹

BY CARL RUSSELL FISH

Only by a study of local history can we hope really to understand the development of human society. The historian like the scientist must base his knowledge on what can be seen through a microscope. Wisconsin, from the time of its formation as a state, has realized this, and has steadily confirmed itself in the opinion. This institution, which it founded in the days of its youth and scant resources, it has supported with a liberality, public and private, growing as its wealth has grown. Of late years, a corps of local societies, city and county, have been forming about the central institution. The University has directed its students to the study of the localities from which they have come, and stores in its stacks the facts which they glean. No one of the newer states of the country knows itself so well as Wisconsin, and if, as is so often the case, acquired knowledge seems merely to reveal the knowledge still necessary for real understanding, we have carefully developed plans to extend it still more widely and intensively.

Yet how insignificant any locality seems today, when practically all are plunged into the same calamity, when the resources of all are concentrated in one struggle. Races and breeds, nationalities and castes are merged together on the same battle-field. Their similarities of plight and object dominate their differences, the protective barriers each erected to preserve that distinctiveness so dear to human nature seem leveled, and history has become world history. Men thrown thus physically into the maelstrom find themselves intellectually also torn from their safe anchorages and adrift they know not where. What does the individual count for, what

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the locality, what the past? What counts it to study the development of Rock County cheese-making, when its cheeses and cheese makers are tumbled promiscuously with those of all counties and nations, simply as units in a staggering sum total?

The world has changed, but that is not startling. The world is always changing. This change is greater, and for us in America more sudden and dramatic, than any which preceded, but everything has not changed. The relation of the past to the present and the future is permanent. The relations of the individual, the locality, and the whole, shift, but they are the permanent factors of which life consists. The world war has not changed these factors, but it should bring us up sharply to a realization of what they really mean. Socrates' dictum "know thyself" was not given in any selfish spirit. He did not mean that we were to devote ourselves to ourselves, but that we could know ourselves more thoroughly than we could know others, that self-knowledge was the completest knowledge, and therefore the Archimedian lever to open up knowledge of others. Self-examination has often become an obsession excluding all else, the study of local history has often become antiquarianism. The real reason for the cultivating of both is the formation of known bases from which to calculate. The German historian, Lamprecht, became so familiar with the little city of Trêves that he could have conversed intimately with its inhabitants of any year during the Middle Ages if he might have been dropped into it, but this devotion was not for the sake of Trêves, it gave the understanding knowledge necessary for his great work on German civilization as a whole. We can know no generation unless we have delved deep into the souls of its greatest men, but such biographical studies are not for themselves alone, but to contribute to a sympathetic comprehension of their contemporaries.

Local history to justify itself must be as exact and absolute as studies dealing with human nature may be, but if no effort is made to utilize it for an understanding of national and world history, it has missed its mission. Local history is not an end in itself. Moreover, if it is written without a wide knowledge of outside conditions, conditions in other localities, and other times, it will be but a warped product, as useless to the community for which it is written as for the outside world. Such selfishness and egoism have never been profitable. The only difference today is that for the moment at least they have become impossible.

The most striking feature in the history of Wisconsin has been the transformation within a lifetime of a virgin forest into a civilized area, the drawing together of the sons and daughters of many widely differing localities and their welding into a commonwealth. This conquest of the frontier has been but a portion of that vast movement which in a period historically short has created the United States, and more particularly it has been an important and typical battle in the campaign for the Mississippi Valley, which has resulted in our sister states of the Middle West.

Different as has been the history of each, the history of the frontier movement is a whole; the study of any state contributes to an understanding of all. As the occupation of Wisconsin has been but a part of the American frontier movement, so that has not been unique, even in the nineteenth century. We have liked to think of ourselves as carrying on a special and distinct task; to its difficulties and inspiration we have attributed many of our virtues, and on them we have laid the burden of our defects. The task, however, has not been unique. The results have, indeed, had their distinctive differences, but these have come rather from the way the task has been performed than because we have had a different thing to do. We know our own frontier with scientific thoroughness, but we cannot understand it unless we contrast

it with such other frontiers as Australia, Siberia, South America, and Africa.

One of the essential features of a frontier is that both labor and capital come from without, and much of the capital is contributed by people who do not come to the frontier. Exception must, indeed, be made to this statement. The Spaniards found labor in Peru and Mexico, and they found also capital, as did the miners of Australia and California, the lumber barons of Wisconsin, and the fur traders of Canada. In none of these instances, however, did either the local labor or local capital suffice, and in all the instances to be cited later the bulk of the labor came from away, and the owners of an important portion of the capital remained away; the frontier community, therefore, was a debtor community, and the debt was due to an outside community.

This common condition has in all cases had an important bearing not only on economic development, but on the whole texture of the social fabric which was created; it affected not only the frontier itself, but its reflex influence on the sections from which the labor and capital were drawn set at work influences which at times became leading factors in their existence. So important have their influences been, that where the study is confined to any one frontier, they seem to dominate development, and make history their creature. When we extend our study, however, we find that in spite of the fundamental resemblance, each has followed its separate course; that the different balance of other factors, and even such secondary considerations as laws and constitutions, have radically altered the actual operation of these powerful natural resemblances. The control of the frontier's natural resources, the distribution of proceeds, the very content of politics have varied with every frontier. The problem has been one, the methods and results have been as varied as the fields in which it occurred.

In the United States the larger part of the capital came from or through another section of the same country. That is, the East furnished nearly all that was supplied, although to do so it had to borrow somewhat from Europe. The direct loans from Europe to the West were comparatively unimportant. Consequently the interests of the debtor and creditor sections conflicted in the arena of national politics. Two unique features made the working out of the problem different in this country from any other. The first was the division of the country into a large number of states, sovereign within a restricted range of powers, some controlled by the debtor element, some by the creditor. The other was that at one time, and that the most critical, the frontier was strong enough at least to veto the action of the national government.

The result of these conditions was a struggle unusually complex. The control of banking, of the currency, of natural resources, such as lands, minerals, and oil, and of transportation or, as it is phrased in our politics, internal improvements, were the bone of contention. The desire to have these controlled by national or state governments varied with the political situation. The frontier wished banks that would not be too particular, a currency that would be easy to get; it wished, and wishes, control of its own systems of transportation and its natural resources.

The sections furnishing the supplies were more interested in the capital to which strings were tied, than in the labor which cut its apron strings on leaving home. The struggle antedated the Revolution; the high points in its later history were the Shays Rebellion, the Jackson régime, the greenback movement, the Bryan campaign, and it finds present expression in the opposition in the Far West to the national conservation policy.

When the frontier secured the reins of power in the sinewy hands of Andrew Jackson, it was not in a position to impose its policy upon the nation, but it was powerful enough to wrest

banking, the currency, and internal improvements from the control of the national government, and turn them over to the states. The frontier states, elate, started on a mad career of making their own internal improvements, by means of borrowed capital diluted by paper issues, till money ran like fairy gold into the pockets of the needy. For one golden moment the problem of the frontier seemed solved to the satisfaction of the frontier. Jackson himself caused the first crash. Unable to tell good paper from bad, he could at any rate tell paper from gold, and in the Specie Circular of 1836 he brought credit to the touchstone of real value and sent the house of cards toppling. Feverishly rebuilt within the next few years, it fell again in 1841, carrying with it the whole dream of its builders. So severe was the blow that numbers of the states took advantage of their sovereign rights, and repudiated a portion of their debts. Securely entrenched behind their sovereign inviolability to legal attack, they still enjoyed the inviolability to force which their position as part of a larger nation afforded. They snapped their fingers at their creditors; but they could borrow no more. The nation had left the task of national development to the states; the states, by impairing their credit, had rendered themselves incapable of handling it.

This situation left the field free for, in fact rendered necessary, the intervention of individuals or of individuals organized as corporations. The legal position of the latter had already been prepared. The decisions of Justice Marshall had given corporation charters an unusual degree of legal sanctity, which the state constitutions modified rather than reversed. The fears of the Jeffersonian democracy had incorporated into the national constitution itself special restrictions upon the government in dealing with the individual, which the decisions of the Supreme Court under Justice Taney went far in applying to the corporations. Corporations became so firmly entrenched in their position

as the chief agency in national development, that even when, after the Civil War, the national government became more active and once more assumed control of banking and the currency, and the credit of the states was reëstablished, both agencies used their powers chiefly to assist corporations. When, in the present generation, the necessity of public control became obvious, it took the form, for the most part, of regulation of corporations, rather than that of absorbing or supplanting them.

The direction of the development of transportation and the exploitation of natural resources, therefore, was, for the most part, in the hands of individuals, and, in the case of large projects, of individuals organized as corporations, and, with the exception of farm land, of individuals and corporations representing nonresident capital. Many influences, of course, modified their activities, but these affected rather the security of their capital than the initiative of their plans. Many lost the capital which they poured into the new region, and the result was that the prospect of large returns was demanded by others before venturing; speculation, lost investments, and abnormally productive investments characterized the process as a whole. Politicians concerned themselves rather with the means, the questions of banking and currency, than with the end, the character of the development which should take place.

The other independent portions of the American continents, for the most part, resembled the United States in organization, but the distribution of the economic factors differed and produced different results. Except in the United States, the capital which has been necessary for the occupation of the wilderness has come, for the most part, not from other portions of the same country, but from foreign countries.

The most important of these frontiers during the nineteenth century has been that of Argentina. Here the established section was until recently comparatively unimportant,

both labor and capital came in large measure from abroad; the greater portion of the labor from Italy, of the capital from Great Britain. The conflict between the debtor and creditor sections, therefore, was not one of politics, but of diplomacy. Argentina might have what system of banking and currency it wished, but most creditors had to be paid in an international standard of value. In a world state, doubtless, all the frontiers would unite to further their interests, as the frontier states have in the United States; in the world as at present unorganized the ultimate appeal is to force. A debtor country, and one relatively weak as compared with its creditor, Argentina has not been without its plans, conceived like those of the American frontiersman without moral dishonesty but with incapacity or unwillingness to think the thing through, for easing its burden. In the efforts of Calvo and Drago to incorporate into international law the principle that debts between nations and their citizens may not be collected by force, we see as surely the reflection of frontier views, as in the programs of Greenbacker and of Populist. In the greater interest in international affairs in Argentina than in the United States, we see a new illustration of the aphorism "For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also."

In the long run, Argentina has had to pay up, and has had to pay also in high interest rates, for the lack of a feeling of absolute security on the part of the investor. Probably few countries have had more expensive statesmen than Drago and Calvo.

To attract capital, moreover, it has been necessary to offer it abundantly the undeveloped natural resources of the country. On the other hand, the logic of the situation has kept development in the hands of the nation to a greater degree than in the United States, for the nation has been able to borrow money more cheaply than individuals or domestic corporations, and public ownership has played an important part in her upbuilding.

Argentina has paid, and so we have a situation which has never culminated in a crisis. The republics of the Caribbean have not been so fortunate. Much of the money has been borrowed, not for the purposes of improvement, but to finance revolution and for personal expenditure. Frittered away instead of put at productive work, it has become an increasing burden, in many cases an unbearable burden, and countries like Hayti, San Domingo, Honduras, and at times Mexico, have become internationally bankrupt. Protected against legal action by their sovereignty, the creditor and the debtor stood in a situation where force alone could determine their relationship. What the result would normally have been, is clearly enough indicated by the intervention of France in Mexico in 1861, and of Germany in Venezuela in 1902. The subjugation of the weak debtor by the strong creditor has been prevented not by sovereignty, but by the interposition of a third force, the United States inspired by the Monroe Doctrine.

While, however, the Monroe Doctrine served to maintain the appearance of independence for the nations concerned, it produced an *impasse* in the development of the frontier. Capital did not have to go to countries which could not be relied upon to pay up and which were protected from foreclosure by an outside force. The United States served the republics in somewhat the same manner that it did its own repudiating states. It was, however, unable to do as much for them as it did for its own. The wayward republics found themselves debarred from directing their own development as did our states in the critical forties, and there was no domestic capital to undertake the task. The capital willing to engage in work under such circumstances was that of the most speculative sort. Some gamblers staked their money on presidential contenders, seeking to gain control of the government. Others, more powerful and trusting in their power, offered to embark huge sums on condition of receiv-

ing stupendous grants of the natural resources and practical control of the whole development to be made in certain regions. Such was the much-discussed Morgan syndicate proposal to Honduras, and that of the English Pearson syndicate to Columbia. In the latter instance, the United States again intervened, fearing the influence of such aggregations of foreign capital, and expressed its opinion that such special concessions violated the spirit of the Monroe Doctrine and could not be allowed.

From the tightening deadlock thus produced, Diaz extricated Mexico for a time, but it lapsed, and the others showed no signs of the power to emerge. Such European capital as had been loaned felt not unjustly angry, such as was for hire sought other avenues and frontiers less peculiarly hedged in. The situation shouted for action, and action could come only from the United States, which would not permit simple logic to work its own conclusion. It was under such circumstances that President Roosevelt assumed the financial administration of San Domingo and inaugurated a policy which has been followed and extended by his successors. Justice, or approximate justice, has been done between debtor and creditor, but the active development of these frontiers is still halted for lack of a machinery for the future.

In striking contrast with these American frontiers has been that of Siberia. Here has taken place one of the greatest frontier advances of history, here the same localization of creditor and debtor has existed, yet the conflict of classes and sections has led neither to politics as in the United States, nor to diplomacy as in Latin America. Much of the capital has been provided by France, but the money has, for the most part, been borrowed by the national Russian government, representing a strong nation and an essential ally. The security of the creditor has rested in the good faith, not of the frontier but of an established society, which has wished

constantly more and more money and has realized that an atmosphere of credit must be preserved.

As the frontier has had nothing to say concerning its credit relationships, so it has been equally powerless in controlling the expenditures of the money borrowed and the disposition of its natural resources. The sole check upon the absolute will of the central government has been the desire to attract labor to the frontier. Few laborers, as few capitalists, seek the wild for the mere adventure of subduing it. The bids and rival bids for settlers by those controlling various sections of the world-frontier for the last three centuries have been to a large extent the basis for those more liberal institutions which have developed on the fringe of society. Their bids have been determined by the character of the settlers they desired or found available, and have in considerable measure determined the character of the communities built up. Force has played its part as well as lure, and has given incurious Africa a share in the development of the Americas that the most psychological advertiser would never have secured for it. In the nineteenth century, Russia has had more command of force to populate her waste spaces than any other country. Consequently the actual frontiersmen have had less to say about the development of their own region than elsewhere. Yet it is easily possible to exaggerate the coercive power of the central government, in popular estimation it is probably exaggerated; and the plans for the settlement of Siberia have been to no small degree influenced by consideration for the ideals of the typical Russian and the incentives which would coerce him to move his hearthstone. Yet on the whole, simplicity and the carrying out of preconceived plans have worked the opening of this great frontier. That the great release which has just occurred in Russia will reveal where these plans have bound, and that the politics of the new republic will be colored by frontier problems, is inevitable.

Australia and New Zealand have, to an even greater extent than the American frontier, secured their labor and capital from another section of the same empire. The relations between the sections, however, are quite different. The local organization of the debtor communities resembles that of the American states; in fact, the scope of their power is much broader, but they do not possess that inviolability to legal attack which sovereignty gives, and have not been represented in the central government. Credit, therefore, has been a matter of neither politics nor diplomacy, but has been as firmly controlled by the lending section, England, as that of Siberia has been by Russia. Judicial unity, which has been the only organic bond of empire, makes the sovereign, like the Crown, identical in Brisbane and in London. There is no chance of reducing debts save by a separation, which other considerations have rendered furthest from the wishes of the debtors.

General diplomacy also has been largely excluded from local consideration. The creditor-debtor relationship was almost exclusively one within the empire, and the handling of other diplomatic questions was in the hands of the British government in which the frontier sections were represented only by influence. The attempts to arouse an imperial, not to say international, mind found hard sledging during the real development period, and only partially succeeded just before the Great War.

On the other hand, the locality has been absolute master of the expenditure of its borrowings. No subordinate communities in the world, most decidedly not the states of our Union, have been left so entirely free to control their development, not only to plan their transportation and allot their natural resources, but even to regulate their tariffs. It is not surprising that these governments, with credit carefully maintained by outside and unquestionable forces, found their politics in the working out of such development, and that,

in large measure, borrowing has been done by the local governments, which have themselves spent the money borrowed. There can be no better security than that of a government incapacitated from repudiation. Creditors have lost comparatively little money to these frontiers, and so Australia and New Zealand have received their needed capital upon better terms, perhaps, than any of the other regions treated. How wisely they have spent it, is a matter of the most violent dispute.

Politics in communities barred from the great questions of credit and diplomacy yet organized on the basis of the broadest democracy and local autonomy, have naturally had their strikingly significant characteristics. Everyone knows how rich their statute books have been in laws relating to the distribution of natural resources and of all kinds of wealth, and to conditions of living. Everyone knows the sharp antagonism between labor, in the narrower sense of wage earner, and employers. That these frontiers have been experiment grounds in social legislation has not been due to their being frontier communities but because they have been frontier communities freed from some of the most characteristic frontier problems.

Rhodesia resembles Australia and New Zealand in local autonomy and lack of representation in the national government. In other respects, however, it is widely different. Here capital came first, and labor afterward. The capital, moreover, was not of the timid sort seeking small return and security, such as invested in the securities of New Zealand, Victoria, and New South Wales, nor did it entirely resemble that of the United States during the development period, which sought returns both large and immediate. The capitalists of Rhodesia could wait, in fact, are still waiting. Alone among the frontiers, Rhodesia has not been under the strain of seeking to make returns on its invested capital before development has reached the stage where returns can

properly be expected. It may well hope to be freed from those complications of individual indebtedness, which have filled our courts with business, and strewn our advance with such tragedies as are even today occurring in northern Wisconsin.

Upon the capitalists thus far-sighted and enduring rested the full burden of development. The region was antonomous in its relation to the British Empire, but its non-resident creditors mapped out its future, not its settlers as in Australia. Capital under such circumstances looks for large rewards, and in this case expects to secure them by control of the natural resources, when these have been made available by the incoming of settlers. Youngest of the frontiers, the working of the old factors in this new relationship remains a question. One would expect economy and efficiency in planning, but possible conflicts between the resident community and its creditors over the division of the proceeds. The settlers that it seeks are of the most independent type, men not with energy alone, but with some small capital of their own. It offers them not only economic opportunity but also political privileges. How such a population will react under a system which restricts politics one degree more than they are restricted in Australia, by excluding the larger lines of local development such as transportation, is one of the interesting questions of tomorrow. One might look for some clue in the history of the American colonial proprietorships, but how far the intelligent study of those experiments will have enabled the proprietors of Rhodesia to avoid their mistakes, and how far the changed conditions created by two centuries of the most rapid change the world has seen, will modify the interworking of similar forces, no one can tell.

In organization, Canada is today, of course, like Australia, but whereas the commonwealth of Australia is but recent and was formed only after the scaffolding of development had been created, the Dominion of Canada was created

in season to direct the most active period of frontiering. During the most significant period, therefore, Canada has had an organization that resembled our federal states. The resemblance, however, is partly superficial; in Canada the specified powers belong to the provinces, the undefined powers to the Dominion. Neither provinces nor Dominion, moreover, have possessed the legal inviolability of absolute sovereignty. The credit of all has been protected by the judicial unity of the empire, and the stability of the currency has not been a subject for politics. Diplomacy, also, has belonged to the mother country, although the proximity of the United States has not allowed it to be the blank it was so long in its Australian sister-colonies.

Economically the development of the Canadian frontier has more resembled that of the United States, for the capital required has come most largely from or through other sections of the same colony. As compared with the United States, however, development has been, until quite lately, slow. Consequently those regions which have passed beyond the frontier stage have continuously controlled the central government. There has been no parallel to the Jackson régime. Credit, therefore, has been doubly guarded, by the majority in Canada, and by Canada's position within the British Empire. With the credit of the Dominion and of the provinces intact, there have been no intrinsic obstacles to the development of transportation and the control of resources by the public, and public works have played an important part. At the same time the period of greatest need coincided with the high tide of the individualistic movement in the Anglo-Saxon world. The principles of John Stuart Mill, of Cobbett and Bright, of Gladstone, Carlyle, and Emerson, dominated a generation devoted to the task of breaking down time-worn systems of social control and releasing the individual. The period of new regulations dictated by rising democracy had not swung in. Therefore, a very considerable portion of the

task was left to private corporations, to whom were granted very considerable proportions of the natural resources. Corporation control and public enterprise, therefore, combined with unusual harmony in developing and exploiting a frontier which was, indeed, represented, but which could control in neither a positive nor a negative sense.

The recent and sudden expansion of the Canadian frontier in the west and northwest has created a new balance. The situation in Canada today resembles that in the United States when the advance of population from the Alleghanies to beyond the Mississippi gave the frontier an unusual political weight, and elected Andrew Jackson. This region is just now in the position where it is so eager to get capital that it is ready to agree to almost any terms to secure its railroads and farm machinery. When pay time comes, its sentiments will change. It is difficult to see how it can upset credit, but that, in combination with the democracy of the older portions of Canada, it will make its voice felt and play a part in Canadian politics that the frontier has never played in the long course of Canadian history, no student of frontiers can doubt.

On the whole, Canada has secured its capital at low interest rates, lower probably than any other frontier except Australia and New Zealand. It has, however, sacrificed the control of its natural resources to a considerable degree. The direction of its development has attracted both public attention and the labor of its strongest men controlling private capital. In none of the frontiers have the two systems been so equally blended.

Most hapless of the frontiers is that of Manchuria. It is at present a represented province of an imperial republic, which furnishes most of the labor required, but can furnish neither capital nor protection. Its capital comes, for the most part, from two rival foreign powers, who are not really creditor nations, but who are so eager to invest in Manchuria that they borrow from still other countries for the purpose. The

local community has no more to say in regard to its development or the partition of its resources than Siberia. It does not, indeed, rest under any such obligation of paying as does Australia, for power rather than money return is sought by Russia and Japan, who furnish it with money on their own security and, therefore, at reasonably low rates. Undoubtedly, however, the successful grasp of power will mean such a hold on natural resources as will give those countries, in return for their guarantee, rewards which will be more satisfactory to them than to the actual conquerors of the Manchurian wilds. It will be interesting to see whether sectional interests will unite the Russian and Japanese settlers with the Chinese majority against the foreign capitalists, or whether racial antagonism will prove stronger than economic. Countless cross currents already chop the surface, and conditions point rather to a problem than a state.

Wide as is the field covered by the frontiers discussed, the Mississippi Valley, Argentina, the wilds encircling the Caribbean, Siberia, Australia, Canada, and Manchuria, it covers barely half the area where since the year 1800 European civilization has been struggling to establish itself by the occupation of regions wholly or partly vacant. Different as have been the conditions classified under which the simple underlying factors universally involved have operated, more have been left undescribed. Algiers has had a frontier incorporated as an integral part of France, a centralized republic. In fact, practically every region of Africa has presented a frontier, and the handling of frontier conditions by English, French, and Belgians, Boers, Germans, Portuguese, Italians, Spaniards, and American negroes. The greatest frontier area today is Brazil, and every country of Latin America has a frontier and its own slightly varying organization and balance of forces, while the British, French, and Dutch are all severally trying their hand on the particular problem of a tropical American frontier. Some portions of India, Persia,

Arabia, Indo-China, China, Korea, the Philippines, Formosa, and many South Sea Islands, present the problem under special guises. Sweden, Norway, Russia, Canada, and the United States are all dealing with the possibility of pressing civilization into the fastnesses of the Arctic.

When one considers the extent of the world frontier in process of occupation during the last century, the persuasive effect of its call upon the older world for labor and capital, the coloring of the whole world by the natural resources it has unearthed and the institutions it has developed, its conquest can hardly be considered as second in influence to any factor of the time. Naturally it is not intended to present here even a basis for its study. The fundamental factors and the different systems can be accurately enough described in general terms, but the differences in their operation are less precise than has been indicated; private corporations exist in Siberia, state public improvements in the United States. Many of the similarities produced everywhere by frontier conditions have been neglected. The attempt has been merely to indicate some of the tendencies fostered by different types of control. The differences between the various frontiers, resulting from race and geography, which in many cases explain the different types of organization or modify their working, have been left untouched. The problem is immense, its study is one for generations. Yet some things he who runs may read. Even a partial acquaintance with the main features of all cannot but render the work of each statesman and historian more effective in his own particular task.

Some things will be understood only when no frontier, as we know it, exists. Yet even while we are in the current, we have accumulated some material, and it would seem to be contributory negligence not to use it. It must be patent that one must be honest or must pay for it. Can we not secure some rough idea of which system of approach has resulted in the greater justice between the creditor and debtor section,

and what is justice? Has community control of its development or creditor control been most economical and most effective? Has exploitation to produce local capital any justification? What system has called to the task the greater proportion of ability? Would the United States have fared better under a system by which Webster, Clay, and Calhoun would have devoted to moulding the transportation system the genius they spent in bolstering up public credit? Which system has been the most responsive to the needs of the situation, and which has stimulated the greatest amount of public virtue, and which has been most easily manipulated for selfish advantage?

I haven't the slightest intention of answering these questions here; I freely admit that many of them leave me perplexed, but I dogmatically maintain that it is by pondering such questions, by studying the comparisons they suggest, that the frontier problem is to be understood by the historian and comprehended by the statesman. Without such comparisons the student of the problem in any one field is less apt to judge a particular episode rightly than a man with no knowledge and good intentions. The path to wisdom and sure-footed action must be founded on the rock of exact knowledge, but it must be platted on a wide-spread survey.

All life reveals the irony of wisdom attained only by the experience to deal with which it was needed. It is but today we have this rich storehouse of experimental frontier building, and tomorrow we will have no frontier. It might seem that we could let a dead past bury its dead, that the study of frontier episodes, however successful, has become sheer anti-quarianism. Such a view, however, minimizes the world frontier that remains and the time and effort that will be required in its conquest. As in science, so with the material world, the nineteenth century made easy sweeping advances; it left much that was difficult for the slower and more laborious labors of the twentieth. It overlooks the facts that great masses of the world's inhabitants today count the experi-

ence of meeting the wild first-hand among the most important of their nearby inheritances, that the frontier set its mark upon them or their parents, or grandparents, and that the present generation cannot be understood unless the frontier is understood. Still more important is the consideration that in many instances the frontier merely localizes problems that are general. The factors with which this paper has dealt are peculiar to the frontier only in that the creditors are assembled in one section, the debtors in another. This is an important peculiarity in large part because it isolates the characteristics of each, and makes them easier of study. When the world has been fully occupied, new frontiers will appear, are already appearing. Natural resources now undreamed of will need capital and labor for their exploitation, will be susceptible of development in more than one way, and will raise problems of control. Our experiences with the rude and simple problem of the first occupation of a waste area will seem as geometry to calculus compared with those raised by these new frontiers, but will be as essential to a wise handling of them as geometry is to calculus.

But the instances that we have reviewed seem to carry a simpler and more immediate moral. When we see in the United States people of all nations laboring for the conquest of the Mississippi Valley, and employing money saved by New England and the Middle States or borrowed by them from Europe, when we see Russia borrowing French money to make Siberia habitable for Russian peasants, when Japan borrows in England, and Russia in France to pay Chinese to develop transportation in Manchuria, when Argentina borrows English money to employ Italians in the pampas, and Transvaal gold passes through English banks to build Rhodesian railways, we get glimpses of a new world. Not that these things are absolutely novel, but that in variety and extent they are unparalleled, and these experiences on the frontiers but bring into clearer view general tendencies of the time. The German invasion of Belgium uncovered for

most of us the tens of thousands of Russians working in the Liege factories, the hundreds of thousands of Russians working on German farms, of Italians on the Rhine, of Spaniards in France; the war itself has hastened the movement with its vast importations of Indo-Chinese and Arabs into France, with its tight-woven mesh of international credit. The frontier still reveals most clearly how in the nineteenth century the business of life became international and how poorly devised was the world organization for coping with it.

Again, the experience of the frontier in the nineteenth century exhibits one step in the process of readjustment. Can one review the instances which have been noted, without feeling the theory of absolute sovereignty crumbling beneath his feet? The United States has in practice divided the sovereignty, and as a result surrendered the actual control to corporations they themselves created. The British Empire preserved unity in theory, but actually divided it still more effectually. What can a practical man make of the sovereignty of Honduras, where the native government cannot control its own development, the British Empire cannot protect its citizens' money, and the United States can veto the actions of both but cannot take positive action; or of Manchuria, which is an integral portion of a sovereign republic, but which is actually as to one-half controlled by Russia and the other by Japan, both of whom are somewhat curtailed in their actions by promises to the United States. However one may cling to the legal theory of the absolute and indivisible character of sovereignty in independent localities, a study of the world frontier brings out the fact that no localities are independent in fact, or absolutely sovereign. The intergrowth of the world, which the development of the world frontier has so much facilitated, has already weakened the bulwarks of local independence; let us hope that with its international character the frontier may facilitate the integration of a world organization better adapted to the conditions of today, such an organization as tomorrow will be a necessity.